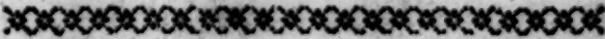


LETTERS

ON THE

ELOQUENCE of the PULPIT.



[Price One Shilling and Sixpence.]

LECTURES

ON THE

ELOQUENCE of the PULPIT.

[Price One Shilling and Sixpence.]

Gal. 10. G. d.

L E T T E R S

K.

ON THE

ELOQUENCE of the PULPIT.

Dr. John Langhorne
BY

The EDITOR of the LETTERS between
THEODOSIUS and CONSTANTIA.



L O N D O N,

Printed for T. BECKET and P. A. DE HONDT, at
Tully's Head, near Surry-Street in the Strand.

MDCCLXV.

[Handwritten flourish]

LETTERS

ON THE

ELOCUTION OF THE PULPIT

BY

The Editor of the *Literary Review*
Theological and Ecclesiastical



L O N D O N

Printed for T. Bland and P. A. Colclough at
Tully's Head, near St. Dunstons Church, in the Strand.
MDCCCXXV.

A P O L O G Y.

THE World has had Treatises of Rhetoric enough to strike it dumb. From the *Artes Rhetoricæ* of CLEANTHES and CHRYSIPPUS, down to the *Circle of the Sciences*, much labour hath been employed in cultivating the powers of language; but it has, for the most part, been employed in vain; and while the Authors of such Treatises pretended to teach the Arts of Persuasion, they have, in general, been unable to persuade their Readers to attention.

With such examples before him, the Writer of the following Letters would certainly have let the pen sleep, and thereby avoided at once, the insults of censure, and the mortification of neglect; but it appeared to him, as, possibly, it does to every Adventurer in the

B

Pro-

ii A P O L O G Y.

Province of Letters, that in the department he assumed, some things had been hitherto unattempted which might give success to his labours.

That this is the case with regard to the Eloquence of the Pulpit, probably those, who are not unacquainted with what has been written on the subject, will be entirely of his opinion. If from the assistance of Philosophy, from an attention to Nature, to the powers of Expression, and the propriety of Elocution, he should be so happy as to strike out any useful hints for promoting the Eloquence of the Pulpit, his candid brethren will not, he is hopeful, refuse their indulgence to the defects of a work, which, submitted to their judgment, is entirely at their service.

L E T-



LETTERS

ON THE
ELOQUENCE of the PULPIT.



LETTER I.

On the Subjects of Composition.

YOU are certainly right in your
Y opinion, that the subjects of
Pulpit Oratory cannot be uni-
form; for they are under the influence of
Times, Manners, and Societies. Upon

some occasions it has been the Preacher's obvious duty to inculcate the first principles of Faith; where these were generally received, it was more incumbent upon him to enforce the practice of the moral duties.

The subject of a discourse from the pulpit ought always to be adapted to the genius and manners of the congregation before which it is delivered: The same sermon which might have as good an effect as could reasonably be expected at ST. JAMES's, would become very improper and very ineffectual indeed, if preached in the parish churches of LLANGWILLIDOG, or MEVAGIZZY; and the discourse that might be very proper, and as effectual as any sermon could be, at either of the last mentioned places,

places, would lose both its efficacy and its propriety if preached at the former. The reasons are obvious. It would be impertinent to declaim against the prevalence of luxury, or to enforce the discipline of self-denial, amongst a people who could with difficulty obtain the mere necessities of nature, and who depended for their bread upon the industry of the day; but amongst such a people to establish the principles of justice and honesty; to prevent the children of poverty from preying upon each other; to teach them, from religious considerations, resignation to their humble allotments; and to convince them that a handful, with quietness, is preferable to the condition of riches abused; to shew them that contentment is more commonly the lot of obscurity than of greatness,

ness, and to satisfy them that the health of temperance, and the good conscience of an honest life, are the parents of that contentment—These would be themes rightly calculated for the happiness and instruction of the hearers.

On the other hand it would, perhaps, be superfluous, before a wealthy audience, to enforce the restraints of moral justice; because such a society, it is to be presumed, could have no temptation to transgress those restraints—To expatiate on the happiness of humble and contented poverty, would be still more out of character, since though the Preacher might have due credit for his speculations, they would never, certainly, be reduced to practice—But before such an audience, to exhibit the natural and
moral

moral evils of luxury and libertinism; to put them upon their guard against the unsocial and unhappy passion of avarice; to open the liberal springs of charity and munificence; to give them the large, expanded, and benevolent sentiment; to convince them that the greatest happiness, for which the human heart has a capacity, arises from the communication of happiness to others; to remind them that they have only received in trust the manifold gifts of God, and to exhort them, *when riches increase*, not to *set their hearts* on them.

—Such are fit subjects for *the ears of this people*.

The subjects of our discourses from the Pulpit are, indeed, much better chosen than they were even half a century ago.

ago.—We begin to see the futility of controversial compositions, and the idleness of altercation on the modifications of faith. The soporific qualities of such discourses seem to have, at length, almost totally annihilated them, as opiates, continually taken, will, in time, destroy the bodies that they lull to rest. They are departed; and—peace be with them! That peace which they never cultivated, attend them to the shades of everlasting oblivion! They will not, it is to be hoped, as the good Mr. MADAN fears his sermons should do, rise up in judgment at the last day. That Gentleman, I remember, after preaching a very extraordinary sermon, prayed that this might not be the case—I know not on what his apprehensions were founded, but for my own part, I had not the least

least doubt that his sermon was of the same species with the *Ephemeron-Worm*, whose existence is limited to the compass of a day.

This, however, might be a pardonable vanity. Since, as it is natural for all men to hope for the duration of their works, so should it be more particularly for good men, who must wish them a long continuance that they may be extensively useful — Yet the possibility of Mr. Madan's sermon rising up in the last judgment is somewhat disputable; for this sermon was not by any means premeditated, or written with a pen upon paper; but was a mere extemporaneous effusion, without body or parts. It consisted entirely of words, which being nothing more or less than air, mixed with

C

their

their congenial element, and were no more. It was impossible that any of Mr. Madan's hearers should remember the distinct parts of this discourse, because the parts of it were not distinguishable; it was impossible they should retain the substance of it, for it had no substance—For the same reasons it would be equally impracticable for the Preacher to recollect it himself; and how, then, should it rise up in the judgment?

The subject of Mr. M.'s discourse, notwithstanding, was one that can never be too often treated in the pulpit. The benevolence of the Supreme Being it was, or ought to have been, that he should have described from these words, "Not that we loved him, but "that he loved us;" and though the
me-

method he took to display it, by condemning the greatest part of mankind "to howl in the flames of hell for ever—more," was not, certainly, the happiest he might have hit upon, yet the subject itself deserves the attention of every Christian Preacher.

I know of no arguments so likely to engage men in the service of God, as those that demonstrate the divine goodness. The fear of distant evil is not naturally implanted in the mind of man, and, indeed, it is absolutely necessary for his present peace that it should not: There is a fortitude in the heart, possibly founded in pride, but certainly strengthened by insensibility, that repels the attacks of fear from objects that are remote. Hence, I verily be-

lieve, that to declaim upon the terrors of future punishment is a much more ineffectual method of preaching, than to excite the sense of affection and gratitude, by representing the kindness and beneficence of our providential Creator. It is more for the honour of human nature to be influenced by gratitude than by fear, and therefore pride, which opposes the last sensation, interferes not so much with the first. He who acts under the influences of gratitude can flatter himself with supposing his acknowledgments an exertion of virtue—They appear, at least, to be voluntary acts, from the reflection that it was in his power to offer, or to withhold them; but he who is moved by no other principle than fear, can derive no pleasure from a conduct that seems to be so little

tle

tle his own, and his religious impressions are not likely to be lasting, when they are not stamped with the approbation of his own heart.

The services of fear are always rendered unwillingly, and, whenever its influence abates, the yoke is shaken off.

It is impossible for any man to be uniformly virtuous, but upon some fixed and invariable principle—Such a principle is not fear. There are none so pusillanimous, in whom it is not at some times suspended, and when that is the case, its effects are suspended too.

I must here desire it may be understood, that by this fear I do not mean that fear of God which at once implies

re-

reverence, gratitude, and affection, but the apprehension of future punishment.

There are, I observe, many times when this apprehension ceases ; nay, rather there are few times when it has any influence on the mind. Business and amusement, pleasure and dissipation, hopes and fears, that spring from sources less remote, have prevalence enough, in general, to put religious fears to flight. These, therefore, cannot be any uniform or invariable principle of conduct.

Upon these conclusions, were a Clergyman to preach from the following text, " The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom," he would certainly do well to rest his principal argument on that reverence which is due to the
Su-

Supreme Being, for the benevolent purposes of all his works.

That affectionate reverence is no unpleasant sensation, and, therefore, the heart is not unwilling to retain it. It may still subsist as a principle of action, because it is accompanied by no painful or degrading sentiment.

But to whom, it will be said, should the Preacher hold forth such images as these? Who are to be influenced by fine, or abstracted sentiments?—Certainly, those who stand most in need of religious influences, the vulgar are no fit subjects for such doctrine—To be capable of gratitude, moreover, a person must be able to think; for this virtue is founded principally on sentiment in the
hu-

human species, though, in creatures of a different form, it appears to be instinctive—Hence it is, that the vulgar are very seldom found grateful to men whom they have seen, and how should they be grateful to God whom they have not seen?

This may have much truth; but then is not this want of gratitude a complaint that ought industriously to be removed? If it be from want of sentiment that the lowest of the people are ungrateful, is not this a want which it is the business of their Ministers more immediately to supply? Surely no very abstracted attention is necessary to make them understand their obligations to the Creator of the universe. They cannot, indeed, consider the Heavens, the work of his hand;

hand; neither the moon, nor the stars that he hath ordained : They cannot observe their laws, or motions with mathematical accuracy, nor understand the connexion, or gradation of systems; yet it may be no difficult matter to convince them, that these glorious bodies are the effects of infinite Wisdom and Benevolence, and that, while they experience their kind influences in the several conveniences of life, the gracious Power that appointed them should not find them ungrateful.

They may be unable to trace the fine dependencies, or to mark, with a critical eye, the proportions of the human system; but they may, surely, be taught to discern the hand of knowledge and of kindness, both in the formation of their

D

bodies,

bodies, and in the means assigned for their preservation.

By this I do not mean, that a sermon should be a lecture of natural philosophy; but where the being and providence of a God can be displayed from his works, Religion receives a fresh support, and Faith makes a new acquisition both of strength and merit, when it becomes an act of reason.

After all, however, as a congregation must be supposed to consist of persons different both in temper and in understanding, no motives that bid the least for prevalence ought to be omitted by the Preacher; who, in this case, should become all things to all men. — Let him, in behalf of the different parts of
his

his audience, preach from different arguments, but so as still to be consistent with himself.—In favour of the more generous and cultivated minds, let him enlarge upon the goodness of THE EVERLASTING PROVIDENCE; and, to influence the meaner and more slavish dispositions, let him hold out, if they will be of any lasting service, the sanctions of religious fear—To engage the obedience of these, let him dwell upon the justice and power of the Supreme Governor; to awaken the gratitude of those, let him expatiate on his mercy, and his invariable benevolence.

To chuse fit subjects for Pulpit-Ora-
tions, requires a greater degree of taste,
and a more perfect knowledge of human
nature than is commonly supposed to be

necessary. There is sometimes a happiness even in the choice of a text, and the subject of a discourse may preach more effectually than the discourse itself.

—I do not allude to the sacred power of a scriptural text; but to certain striking circumstances arising either from the energy and brevity of the expression, or from adapting it, with an obvious propriety, to some temporary occasion—When the fate of Aaron's two sons was pronounced, the sacred Writer gives us this short and striking description—*Aaron held his Peace*—What expression! Would not this be a most proper text for the subject of religious resignation? And would not the text itself plead more emphatically than the most laboured sermon?

I have

I have ever been of opinion, that narrative, or historical sermons, which had a moral tendency, bade the fairest for a hearing, and were most likely to be successful—The mind is kept awake by a story; and, if it be well told, it will not fail to leave a proper impression—The power of abstracted thinking is the lot of few; and attention to moral instruction, conveyed in a series of sentiments, is generally vain—The ideas that are received are evanescent; and the doctrine is, literally, like the dew, which, under the first sunshine, evaporates and is gone—But to judge of the tendency of principles from effects related, is practicable to the meanest capacity; and the history of an event secures the remembrance of its moral instruc-

instruction, by resting undissipated upon the mind.

There are many stories in the sacred writings pregnant with the most interesting morality, some of which have been, and others may be made the most proper and effectual subjects for the Pulpit.

Well did those inspired Writers understand human nature, who preached from facts. They knew that this was the immediate way to the attention, and the surest method of attacking the heart. While instruction is conveyed, *precept upon precept*, the mind obtains an easy defence against such approaches under the covert of negligence, and becomes, at last, perfectly secure in the obsti-

obstinacy of inattention : But to the relation of a story we are always willing to listen, because we apprehend no design upon the understanding, or the heart.

This was, very probably, among the reasons why the Eastern Prophets and Sages chose to convey their admonitions by allegories ; not excepting even those that were intended for the ear of Princes, since their impatience of undisguised and unshadowed truths, obliged them to have recourse to this method—This impatience in Princes might, indeed, be formidable ; but it would still remain as a reason, why we should have recourse to the same veils of truth, though its consequences were only neglect, or inattention.

History,

History, says a learned Writer, who, indeed, has no title to our thanks, is Philosophy realized; historical Preaching, by the same rule, is Truth exemplified, seen most forcibly in its effects, and living before the eye. From conviction like this there is no possibility of escaping: the mind is taken captive at will, and the passions being interested on the side of truth, give it all possible force and influence.

For my own part, might I at all presume to argue from the little experience I have had in the Pulpit, I should not hesitate to pronounce those the most efficacious Discourses that narrated some pathetic, or instructive story from the sacred writings. I have observed the meanest

meanest capacities endeavouring to lay hold of the several circumstances of such relations—Nay, even anticipating the event, and by that means preparing themselves for the instruction that followed.

Controversial subjects have already been excluded the Pulpit, and the fewer Discourses we have merely doctrinal, the better. Some such, however, may be necessary, but it can only be with regard to the plain and simple essentials of faith; to such, therefore, in the name of peace and reason, let them be confined.

Respecting the Eloquence of the Pulpit, the choice of fit subjects for composition is, by no means, of indifferent

E

con-

consequence. Some are much less capable of animation, or embellishment, than others; much less capable of receiving force from the powers of language, or of giving scope to the Orator, through the various and interesting nature of their circumstances and effects.

Those subjects that take in some or other of the tender, or prevailing passions, give the Preacher a twofold power, arising from the peculiar influence of their nature and tendency, and from the possibility of treating them in a more pathetic and affecting manner than those of a less interesting turn would admit of.

L E T -



L E T T E R II.

On the Style of Composition.

GENERALLY it has been agreed, that there is a certain style peculiarly adapted to Sermons; but, surely, it will, without difficulty, be allowed, that as the capacity and temper of the audience should principally be consulted in the choice of the subject, so the former ought always to be a leading consideration in forming the style.

In some congregations, even a vernacular simplicity may be necessary to render the Discourse intelligible—There is scarce any thing in which we are so apt

to form a wrong estimate of the capacity of the illiterate, as in their knowledge of words. Terms that reading or speaking have familiarized to ourselves, we naturally conclude must be obvious to others, and we very often express ourselves to the vulgar in such terms, that, from the knowledge of one half of our words, they are obliged to make out the meaning of the rest. Their case is the very same with his, who reads an Author in a language with which he is but slightly acquainted, without the help either of a dictionary, or a translation.

The unlearned can only gather their knowledge of words from the frequency of their use in conversation—If we consider their expression, we shall find that
it

it extends not beyond the usual and necessary terms of actions and things; consequently, if we would render ourselves intelligible to such people, we must confine our language to those very terms and phrases that they commonly make use of.

Here, however, it may be observed, that there is not, on this account, any necessity for degrading our compositions by low, or ludicrous images. It is the mere diction, not the imagery of the populace, that we are to adopt.

It will bear a question, whether, in the use of similes, and, indeed, of figurative expressions, in general, we are not desirous of shewing our wit, rather than of explaining our meaning. Our

lan-

language is become so copious, and the terms of every idea are so much at hand, that the expression of figures, however useful in the infancy of letters, appears now to be in a great measure superfluous—I mean, wherever ornament is not essential to the composition.—And yet, in Discourses where nothing more than plainness and perspicuity should be aimed at, a close comparison may have a good effect upon the memory, though it was not necessary to illustrate the sentiment.

But it is always unnecessary to copy the imagery from very low, or ridiculous objects. The productions of Nature, and the operations of Agriculture have opened to the inspired Writers a large field for comparative and metapho-

taphorical language, and why may they not afford the same privilege at this day to the Minister who preaches to a congregation of Peasants?—While he keeps intirely within the limits of the field, and borrows his images from known objects, he cannot be wrong, provided always that those be not so utterly contemptible as to render his Discourse burlesque, or farcical.

In congregations of this kind, our whole success depends upon the perspicuity of our style—In vain do we preach if we rise above the vernacular expression; and yet it will sometimes be difficult to know whether we really are above it—Terms, as hath once before been observed, that are familiar to ourselves, we are apt to think equally obvious

vious to others; and, whatever may be thought of it, it is no easy matter for a person who has been accustomed to write and converse with Elegance, to fall into the style and idiom of Rustics.

Here, then, is a new task for the Preacher: instead of seeking to enrich, he must be industrious to impoverish his language—Instead of cloathing his sentiments with the flowers and foliage of expression, he must divest them of every external ornament, and exhibit them naked to the eye, or they will not be known.

This renders it much more difficult to influence the ignorant, than it is to prevail upon more cultivated minds. Truth has the advantage of appearing

to

to the latter under the embellishments of taste and elegance. Her beauty is rendered more engaging by her dress, and her charms acquire a new influence from the lights in which they are displayed—But should she, thus apparelled, make her approach to the Peasant, her presence would confound him, and she would remain unknown.

There are three degrees of intellectual capacity, which, agreeably to their respective powers, are differently affected by moral truths. The Peasant beholds them as they appear simply laid down to him, in their effects and consequences; concerned about them only so far as he apprehends them to have some relation to his own interest. The Scholar receives them under the orna-

F

ments

ments of language—To him they are not entirely abstracted from sense; they gain upon the ear through the harmony of polished periods, and make their court to the visual sense in the decorations of fancy—Of these advantages they have no need, when they appear before the Philosopher. He admires them for their natural beauty, and his delight is to contemplate their order, their harmony, and connections in the moral government of the universe.

The first class of understandings is by far the most numerous; and it is, therefore, more immediately the business of the Pulpit to consult their benefit and instruction.

Upon

Upon this principle, a composition, intended for an audience of Rustics, ought to be conceived in their current idiom, and in terms perfectly familiar to them.

It may, possibly, be a little mortifying to a young Preacher, fond of the foliage of words, and the affluence of expression, to dress his sentiments in such beggarly language—The display of Eloquence is a tempting thing—But then to be eloquent to no purpose, is, certainly, both idle and absurd.

To what purpose can it be to pour into the ears of Peasants modulated periods, and sentences metaphorically rich? “So fight I, as one that beateth

“ the air,” might be a very proper text for such preaching. The case is not the same in regard to apprehending the objects of the understanding, as those of the senses.

A building of the nicest proportions, and the most exquisite relief, may have a good effect on the eye of a person entirely unacquainted with the rules of Architecture: the result of the whole may be striking, though the laws by which the several parts were composed are unknown—But let a Discourse be so finished as to form a model of the most perfect writing—Let it convey the most exalted Morality, and breathe the purest and the happiest sentiments, it cannot, possibly, have any effect upon the Vulgar, if the language rises above their own.

The

The first rule, then, with every Preacher, should be to accommodate himself to the capacity of his hearers. To this, every other consideration must be sacrificed without mercy—At this shrine must fall the flowers of imagery, and the elegance of diction—The end of speaking is to be understood, and if that end be not obtained, what is the speaker better than sounding brass, or than a tinkling cymbal?

It must be a painful thing for a person of sentiment and sensibility to deliver any thing before an audience, which he is conscious they cannot apprehend—And he who would rather have his expression admired, than his meaning understood, has a claim to the merit of a *Petit Maitre*,

Maitre, who looks for respect from his dress more than from his understanding.

But is there, then, or is there not, a standard of style proper for Sermons?—If what has generally been observed be true, that there is such a standard, have we any unexceptionable pattern in our own language?—The Sermons of our Divines are allowed, by the liberal part of Europe, to be the best and purest compositions within the province of Theology—Shall not we find in these, then, some pattern which we may follow without exception, and without deviation?—Shall we imitate the sentimental and deep-searching BARROW?—Shall we follow the terse, the plain-writing TILLOTSON? Shall we adopt the manner of the metaphorical and the philosophical

losophical ROGERS? Shall we attempt the
 simple, yet artful pathos of ATTEEBURY?
 Or shall we hope for the nervous expression
 of the truth-unfolding WARBURTON?—
 To hope for the united powers of these
 distinguished Writers would be vain—To
 pursue any separate model would, perhaps,
 be ineffectual—For BARROW, though
 deeply-inquiring and replete with senti-
 ment, labours through a wilderness of per-
 plexing periods—TILLOTSON, though
 plain and terse, sometimes sacrifices to a
 debasing idiom, that dignity which ought
 to be preserved in every venerable sub-
 ject—His plainness is often dry, and
 his truths unaffecting—The metapho-
 rical and philosophical ROGERS, though
 aided by elegance, by harmony, and
 fancy, derived from these very excellen-
 cies many disqualifying circumstances,
 and

and generally rose above the capacity of an ordinary audience. The simply, the artfully pathetic ATTERBURY has not done enough to give us a generally perfect model for Pulpit-Compositions; and could we hope for the powers of the Bishop of GLOUCESTER, yet we are to remember, that his Discourses were professedly preached before a learned Society. After such distinguished names as these, then, it will be vain for us to carry our presumptions further, or to conclude that there is any pattern for Sermons which we may generally and unexceptionably follow. Every Writer of Sermons seems peculiarly to have followed the bent of his genius, and rather to have cultivated that kind of Eloquence to which his capacity, or inclination most powerfully led him, than
to

to have placed before himself any general model, to which he might conform his genius and confine his powers. Thus he whose temper and studies have led him to controversial enquiries, whose reason has been exercised in argumentative discussions, and whose labours have been employed in philological erudition, has generally been the same in the Pulpit and in the Closet—His Discourses have usually taken their colour from his studies, and what he thought of consequence enough to engage his private enquiries, he could not but think proper subjects for his public speculations.—The style of such a Preacher could not possibly be brought down to the capacity of an ordinary audience—Scholastic men, when they found out divisions, were obliged at the same time

G

to

to find out terms for them, which, though *generally* obvious to themselves, could not be so to the plain and unabstracted hearer.

Pitiable are the people that have such a Pastor, who, while they ask him for bread, will give them a stone; who will weary them with subtleties they can never lay hold of, and stun them with the jargon of unintelligible phrases!—Yet their Teacher himself is likewise to be pitied; if, what is frequently the case, a reclusive and abstracted life has rendered him so much unacquainted with human nature, that he is unable to judge of the ordinary capacities of men, or to determine, when his people hear his voice, whether they hear not *the voice of a stranger*.

Our

Our studies have of late, however, taken a more liberal turn, and with them the mind hath been cultivated and enlarged. By employing our attention more upon moral and natural disquisitions, we have obtained a better knowledge of nature and of the human heart, consequently we are able to apply ourselves more effectually to it's perceptions, and to tread with greater certainty the way we have explored—But, under these influences too, the Preacher has many temptations to deviate from the open path, and wander astray into the pleasing shades and walks of Philosophy—Yet let him remember, that in so doing he treads forbidden ground; Let him often turn back to see whether his people can follow him, or whether

he has not strayed through tempting mazes 'till they have totally lost sight of him.

There is, moreover, an elegance of style attending these moral enquiries, which is frequently as unintelligible to a plain mind, as that of controversy itself—A style which the Preacher will with difficulty persuade himself to impoverish, because to him it has no other appearance than that of a beautiful simplicity—He forgets that his own understanding has been opened by those attentions for which his hearers have had no opportunities, and concludes, that every eye must perceive with readiness what is so obvious to his own.

The

The human understanding is not generally quick in it's apprehension either of words or of things, and both must have been familiarised by use, before that either can become perfectly known: Nevertheless, are we not conscious that in our ordinary compositions we introduce many terms and phrases which an ordinary hearer never makes use of, and which, therefore, it is more than probable he does not understand?

Suppose, by way of instance, we look into a page of one of our best Sermon-Writers—Let it be the truly ingenious ROGERS—A sentence, perhaps, may serve our purpose, and let us take it accidentally, that the proof may be more convincing.

“ This,

“ This, says he, [the sense of future
 “ rewards and punishments] is a motive,
 “ which alone is capable of determining a
 “ rational being, acting by foresight, and
 “ conscious of eternity. This is what
 “ the wisdom of God hath thought fit
 “ to apply to the hopes and fears of men,
 “ as the sanction of his laws.”——Now
 to an ordinary country congregation, I
 will venture to say that this sentence
 would be almost entirely unintelligible.
 The following phrases, *A motive capa-
 ble of determining—acting by foresight—
 conscious of eternity—apply to the hopes
 —sanction of his laws*, would convey no
 more ideas to such an audience, than a
 section of APOLLONIUS. The reason is,
 partly, because some of the words are
 unknown to the lower orders of people;
 but

but principally because they are combined in such a manner as never occurs in ordinary conversation.

Elegance is a dangerous thing, when in view of a young Preacher, or, indeed, when primarily in view of any Preacher. It seduces him into the use of a phraseology which is altogether superior to common capacities, because it is not familiarised by the common idiom. He derives his mode of expression from what is written, not from what is spoken, and hence he becomes unintelligible to those whose knowledge of their own language is borrowed from no other source than conversation.

This train of thought brings us to an obvious conclusion. Sermons written to
be

be heard, should be conceived in such a style as generally prevails in conversation. Sermons written to be read, may adopt the elegance of other compositions: For though there may be few readers who are not hearers of Sermons, there are certainly many hearers, who never read: And as the latter would be altogether unedified by a Discourse which literary attentions had rendered intelligible to the former, so it were likewise most desirable with regard to Discourses delivered from the Pulpit, that the former should give up their expectations of elegance there, and listen with patience to the plainest compositions intended for the benefit, and adapted to the capacity of the latter.

What

What an equally learned and ingenious Prelate hath observed, with a degree of clearness and of evidence, which a disputative spirit alone would suspect, viz. " that Eloquence is no necessary characteristic of an inspired " language," may be applied in this case ; and it may be asserted, upon the clearest principles of reason, that a style elaborately polished, and adorned with what a *fashionable fancy* calls elegance, will disguise those plain and sacred truths which ought to be delivered from the Pulpit with the same clearness and simplicity, in which they first proceeded from their inspired Authors. For thus, only, the Gospel can still be preached to the poor.

H

This

This simplicity, moreover, carries something of a venerable air along with it; which ought evermore to attend a sacred subject—We sacrifice too much to the passions and the fancies of men, when, to gratify and pay our court to these, we seek to embellish divine doctrines and precepts with the decorations of human ornament—We sacrifice, I say, too much to the fancies of men; for it is to be feared that we derogate from the majesty of God, when we would vainly adorn the truth and simplicity of his word with the pageantry of an ingenious imagination. In such embellishments as become the objects of fancy and admiration alone, that internal dignity which creates veneration and respect is necessarily lost.

The

The doctrines of JESUS will have the greatest weight in their own native simplicity—Let us not put on him the purple robe.

Here then, my friend, I would rest the argument respecting the Style of Pulpit-Oratory. The capacities of his hearers should, in this respect, be the first object of every Preacher's attention—Let him think nothing too degrading that brings his style and sentiments to the level of their understandings—It is not necessary, I once more observe, that in order to do this he should have recourse to images that are farcically low—It is the mode and structure of their idiom, not the phrase itself, that he is to adopt, when he addresses himself to the

low and unlearned—And let him never, if he can possibly avoid it, introduce any word or expression that is not familiarly known to them.

But, methinks, I hear you say, that the Scriptures themselves are not, in our translation, without many words that are unknown to the vulgar—What, say you, do they understand of *terrestrial* bodies, and bodies *celestial*? Nothing certainly, nor of many other expressions which are to be found in our translation of the sacred writings. This, however, proves nothing more, than that he whose province it is to explain those writings, should not himself be mysterious even in words.

Such

Such Discourses as I have here been mentioning, cannot, indeed, extend their influence beyond the Pulpit—They cannot come abroad, extend the reputation of the Preacher, or, what were a more desirable object, enlarge his power of doing good, by making him minister to those in the closet who have not heard him in the church — In Discourses that pass through the press, a degree of elegance is required which is at least above the vulgar idiom, and which those who are accustomed to read cannot dispense with. This is true ; and therefore I repeat it, that we must still make a distinction between Sermons that are to be preached, and those that are to be read. Let the Preacher, who has elegance and power of Style to please and instruct in the closet,

closet, not wrap his Lord's talent in a napkin, but freely exert and extend his abilities in whatever capacity they may be of service—Let him write for the Press; but let him remember, that he is not then writing for the Pulpit; and when he writes for the Pulpit, let him likewise remember, that he is not writing for the Press—The provinces are distinct, and the Preacher must exert himself differently in each, if he would hope to do good in either.



LET-



L E T T E R I I I .

*O*n E L O C U T I O N .

I F what Historians have related concerning the effects of ancient Eloquence be at all more credible than what Poets have told us of the power of ancient Music, we must necessarily conclude, that the Orators of old were possessed of some art we never knew—

That VALERIUS might have it in his power, by rectitude of sentiment alone and clearness of reasoning, to quiet the tumults of the populace, when intoxicated with the idea of unlimited liberty—

That

That ANTONY might, by his personal Dignity, as much as by the power of his Eloquence, confound those soldiers who had received express orders to assassinate him—

That PISISTRATUS might, by the force of a bold and overbearing Eloquence, prevail against the sober counsels of SOLON—

That the more winning PERICLES might, by his speech, obtain popularity, even whilst he spoke against the people—
All these relations we easily admit of, because we do not find it difficult to account for them. But when we are told of the Eloquence of the *Cyrenian* Philosopher ; when we are assured that in
describing

describing the miseries of human life, he had power to drive his hearers to despair, and that many of them actually sought for refuge in death; nay, that **PTOLEMY** found himself obliged to prohibit such subjects, that his kingdom might not be depopulated—Such an effect as this astonishes us, and we must either look upon the thing itself as a fiction, or seek for the cause in some rhetorical powers and excellencies which modern Orators never possessed. If it be a fiction, then every thing else that is extraordinary in antiquity may be deemed a fiction; for this is recorded by **LAERTIUS**, mentioned by **CICERO**, and cited by **VALERIUS MAXIMUS**. If it be not a fiction, then it must be referred to some superior power in ancient Eloquence; as it is certain, if we ex-

cept the brethren of the Tabernacle, that no modern Orator was ever capable of producing any such effects; and it is notorious, that those pious brethren were not indebted for this their peculiar power to any rhetorical excellence, but to their diabolical charges and decrees.

This superiority of the Ancients I take to have consisted chiefly in their manner of Elocution.

—— *Gravis dedit ore rotundo*

Musa loqui——

Pronunciation was so much cultivated by them, and esteemed of such consequence, that it was made the province of the Muse, and considered as under a divine patronage—In point of public speaking this was, certainly, of the last importance.

importance. The power of sounds consists entirely in their modulation, and when they are modulated and combined agreeably to the principles of harmony, their power is known to be very great. It was upon these principles the Ancients studied and formed their Elocution. The elements of Music were the grounds, the instruments were the modulators of their speech—When C. GRACCHUS spoke in public, he had a servant that understood Music behind him, who modulated his pronunciation by playing softly on an ivory pipe—The principal assistance, however, that the Orator derived from this guiding instrument, seems to have respected the TONE and the TIME — *Pronuntiationis ejus modos formabat; aut nimis remissos ex-*

citando, aut plus justo concitato revocando.

These are two leading circumstances to be considered in speaking; for if either of these be neglected, all harmony is destroyed; and without that "hidden soul of harmony," there can be no just, or proper Elocution.

With regard to the Tone, I think the general faults of our Pulpit-Orators will come under these five heads, viz. Effeminacy, Harshness, Bawling, Whining, and Monotony.

It is not easy to say which of these faults is most disagreeable—An effeminate and affected softness of expression in an Orator, who is speaking on the sublimest

sublimest and most sacred truths, is intolerable. A fribble in the Pulpit is the most despicable of the whole offspring of vanity—What a wretch! whom the sacred awfulness of the subject he is treating, and the character he bears, cannot rescue from a ridiculous attention to studied softness, and affected delicacy! Is this Elocution? How improper for the subject! How much better adapted to the follies of the toilet! A vain young man, thus trifling in the Pulpit, and seeming to have no other view than to *lead away silly women*, is not only an object of the utmost contempt; but, in consideration of the disgrace, and the burlesque air he throws upon religion, by the absurd affectation of his Elocution, he is, certainly, chargeable with no inferior degree of guilt. If, indeed, he

is

is so ignorant as to suppose this to be the most effectual method of address, he is to be pitied. If he would aim only at that peculiar sweetness and melody of voice, which Nature has given to some happier speakers, he still mistakes the matter; for if his organs are not formed for such an intonation, every attempt to imitate it will be vain; and every deviation from nature, even in that circumstance, will at least have the appearance of affectation.

There is a Harshness of Tone, likewise; which in an Orator is very disagreeable; and which ought, with the utmost care, to be avoided, where Nature has not so framed the organs as to render the attempt vain; for in such a case it would be followed by a worse extreme. But I
 mention

mention it here, because it is sometimes mistakenly adopted for energy and strength. We err in this, as in most other cases, by deviating from nature. When we would draw sounds from our organs which they are not formed to emit with ease; labour, and harshness, and discord are the consequence. Yet it is not unusual to hear a Preacher, whose voice is naturally liquid, clear, or inclined to tenuity, murdering his accents, by labouring at a hoarse, guttural expression. This error sometimes proceeds from a mistaken idea of what is called Force in Elocution, and sometimes it is one of the many unhappy and disagreeable consequences of imitation. The tone and cadence of some admired Orator are adopted, and, however ill-suited they may be to the voice of the imitator, the
same

same happy effects are expected from them.

In vain : for Nature here must take place. The voice must not be distorted from its usual key, nor aim at those inflections which are not within its pitch.

Upon the same considerations a laboured loudness is to be avoided. It is not Speaking but Bawling; it is not Elocution but Vociferation, which some Preachers aim at in this painful and unnatural exertion of the lungs—To be heard is not so much their object : they mistake loudness for force, and noise for speaking well—Yet if there are those whose only view were to be heard ; they too, perhaps, would be equally mistaken. If the Preacher's voice is not feeble, or
low,

low, there are few Churches in which he will have occasion to raise it into an unnatural key of loudness; a clear, distinct, and well-timed expression will answer the end of hearing much better. It is hardly necessary to observe, that an over-exerted voice can have no harmony; whenever it is stretched beyond its compass, the power of modulation is lost.

Yet, disagreeable as it is, I would rather hear a bawling than a whining Preacher—The one may stun my ear; but the other offends my understanding; while both are equally destitute of Harmony and Propriety of Elocution. Whining is alike irrational and detestable both in Prayer and Preaching. And it is the more unpardonable, as it is seldom so

K

much

much an effect of devotion, as an affectation of it.

This Nutrician cant is not the expression of reverence, for that delivers itself in a solemn, grave, and correct accent : it is not the expression of fear; for in that there is something more restrained and modest; something altogether different from that importunate familiarity which always accompanies this infantine Elocution, and which can only be compared to the cravings of a fawning Child, or to the tone of a Mendicant.

Against the last fault I took notice of, I know not whether it would not be vain to use any arguments, or to lay down any cautions. A Monotony is almost

almost always the result of organs so ill constructed for harmonious utterance, that every endeavour to conquer it entirely must be vain. There are voices which no art can teach to sing; and it is the same with regard to Elocution, which CICERO not improperly calls, *Cantus obscurior*. The command of modulation, and the variety of inflection, are never to be attained by those whose organs are capable of emitting only uniform and unelastic sounds.

The most useful conclusion we can draw from this observation is, that those Parents who intend their Children for the service of the Church, should be no less attentive to their Voice than to their Capacity.

With respect to Time, that other great circumstance to be observed in Elocution, the first and most obvious care should be, to preserve a well-tempered and well-adapted medium in our delivery. Our expression in general should neither be rapid nor loitering. The former would confound the attention; the latter would enfeeble it. It often happens in a hasty pronunciation, that many important and even emphatical words are lost, and if the Preacher be too slow in his utterance, it unavoidably diffuses a languor over the audience.

However, it must sometimes be in Preaching as it is in Conversation. The expression will occasionally be accelerated

rated by the warmth of the sentiment, or retarded by its awefulness, dignity, or grandeur. The attention easily keeps pace with the irritable passions, and requires their expression to be rapid. A slow-timed pronunciation on such a subject, produces impatience; and the audience, anticipating the event, is betrayed into inattention: but objects of awefulness, dignity, or grandeur, ought to pass slowly in review before the eye, because the mind must have leisure both for curiosity and reflection.

Occasional pauses, judiciously and unaffectedly introduced, may serve both to relieve, and to awaken the attention. These pauses are generally admitted after some important and interesting period; yet, possibly, it might have a better

ter effect, if they were rather to precede than to follow such passages; for the attention of the audience, during these rests, is not so much taken up with what is past, as suspended upon what is to come.



LET-



L E T T E R IV.

General Observations, and Conclusion.

I Supposed you would altogether dispense with my observations on the Action of the Pulpit, on which you are sensible how little need be said—A solemn and reverent, but natural deportment alone belongs to that sacred place—When theatrical freedom and variety are introduced, all is familiarity, and respect and dignity vanish together.

Yet you are sure I would not exclude the feelings of the Preacher—Let him feel, but let him not *act*. Let his countenance express the sentiments of his soul;

soul; but let his Gesture be chastised and restrained like that of a man under the most solemn and reverential influences.

There is a wide difference between the exertion of Eloquence upon human affairs, and the exercise of Reason on divine subjects. The utmost freedom and familiarity may be expedient, and even necessary in the first; but the last must never be unattended with that modest and subdued deportment, which the most sacred circumstances should naturally inspire.

In one word, my friend, to give you my last and most serious advice!—As the Fear of God is the beginning of Wisdom, so likewise is it the first principle

ciple of all excellence in Religious Duty—
 It is not needful for me here to make
 that distinction which I have made be-
 fore, that by this Fear I only mean an
 affectionate and filial veneration of that
 Power who gave us being — That
 kind of veneration will always be effi-
 cacious enough to keep us within the
 proper bounds of a conscious and becom-
 ing reverence in every Act and Office of
 Religion.

To attain to any desirable perfection
 in the Eloquence of the Pulpit, always
 remember that it is absolutely necessary
 to be well acquainted with the several
 Branches of Learning that have any
 connection with the Subjects of that
 Eloquence—SOCRATES has truly ob-
 served, that all men are eloquent on

L

those

those subjects which they perfectly understand ; and CÍCERO remarks with equal truth, though with less acuteness, that no man can speak well on those topics which he has not made his study—There is a pleasure which attends the enquiry after truth in every department ; but, more particularly in the investigation of divine truths, there is that interesting and heart-felt satisfaction, which, like a kind of Inspiration, animates the speaker to a happier Expression, and a bolder and more liberal strain of Eloquence.

Once more, too, I would desire you to remember, were I not sure that the goodness of your heart will not permit you to forget, that *The Gospel must be preached to the Poor*—That for the sake of their instruction and consolation in
those

those Promises which alone can render their *burden light*, every other prospect is to be sacrificed, every other view given up—To reconcile the low and illiterate to those humble allotments which Providence has assigned them, and to teach them an acquiescence in the fairer hopes of futurity, ought to be the first, as it would be the noblest and most reasonable pride of every Preacher.

To render the condition of human life happier, or more agreeable to his fellow-creatures, is the greatest virtue of which man is capable—In this he imitates the Supreme Being in his best and most adorable Attributes; and he who preaches the Gospel of Christ to this purpose and effect, is a true and faithful Representative of his Master.

T H E E N D.

B O O K S written by Mr.
LANGHORNE.

1. **T**HE Correspondence of Theodosius and Constantia, from their first Acquaintance to the Departure of Theodosius. 12mo.

2. The Letters that passed between Theodosius and Constantia after she had taken the Veil. 12mo. 3d Edition.

3. Sermons. 2 Vols. 12mo.

4. The Effusions of Friendship and Fancy. 2 Vols. 12mo.

5. Solyman and Almena. 12mo. 2d Edition.

6. Letters on Religious Retirement, Melancholy, and Enthusiasm. 8vo.

7. The Poetical Works of Mr. William Collins, with Memoirs of the Author, and Observations on his Genius and Writings, 12mo.

P O E T I C A L P I E C E S in 4to.

8. The Death of Adonis, from the Greek of Bion.

9. A Poem to the Memory of Mr. Handel.

10. Hymn to Hope.

11. The Viceroy, a Poem.

12. The Visions of Fancy, in Four Elegies.

13. Genius and Valour. 2d Edition.

14. The Enlargement of the Mind. Epistle I. to Gen. Craufurd, written at Belvidere, 1763.

15. The Enlargement of the Mind. Epistle II. to William Langhorne, M. A.